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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Early childhood language development: a case study of a Sri Lankan Tamil child's progress in language acquisition

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Abstract: The paper presents a case study of early childhood language development focused on a Tamil child from Sri Lanka. The research study aims to analyse the progress a Tamil child from Sri Lanka achieves in language development at the five levels: phonological, morphological, syntactical, semantic, and pragmatic. The methodology involves a five-fold linguistic analysis of some utterances extracted from a conversation between the researcher and the subject, who is a six-year-old Sri Lankan Tamil child, based on a story presented in the form of a monologue. It reveals that the child had acquired the necessary language skills in Tamil to communicate his thoughts in advance of the conversation. Also, his speech is equal to that of an adult, if not for some interlanguage expressions and discourse markers. The findings reveal that the child has managed to internalise the structure of the Tamil language, which is his mother tongue. The child possesses a considerable fund of 'language universals' that are required in the narration of his story. Although the story is not his own creation but heard from his teachers or parents, the utterances he makes are similar to those used by an adult. Most of the sentences he utters represent a high level of competence. So, this paper identifies the child's language output under Chomsky's mentalist approach to language and transformational generative language acquisition. It is perceived that his innate language faculties help him utter sentences, in addition to his exposure to the use of language by the adults in the environment.

Keywords: Early childhood language development, linguistic levels, Tamil, utterance.

INTRODUCTION

Child Language Acquisition (CLA) represents a crucial development process that a child undergoes in cultivating its ability to communicate his/her thoughts and feelings, across the first eight years of life. Across these years, a child generally cultivates critical and creative thinking, understanding, and enthusiasm for human relationships. There, CLA is considered the most crucial aspect of one's life as it determines the expressive and receptive skills link with oral communication.

In Tamil culture, like in all other cultures, in bringing up children, it is usual to sing and talk with them about all aspects of life. The Tamil language helps generate reflectional and derivative morphological and syntactical expressions with flexibility in achieving choices concerned with variety in communication. Tamil is a language that can be adapted globally to most of the modern-day language requirements, being one of the most ancient classical languages in the world.

In brief, CLA can be studied in stages during the first eight years. The child initiates cooing, laughing, babbling, and playing with sounds, and making physical gestures such as waving. Gradually, when he reaches the 'jargon phase', the child produces some sound signals as he is trying to talk, but this voicing attempt is not linguistically accorded any speech-giving meaning. At the age of one year, the child begins to utter words. In his second year, the first words utter are clear and meaningful. Words like 'amma' (mother) and 'appa' (father) become normal for a child. However, some more words will add to the vocabulary. Notably, a child can

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understand more than speaking. Finally, a child start producing two or three-word sentences. At the age of three year, the child finds it possible to produce longer and more complex sentences. At this age, he develops the dual ability of acting and talking simultaneously. More abstract and complex conversations develop in the fourth or fifth year demonstrating diversity in his vocabulary acquisition. The child understands some basic grammar with conjunctions: 'eenanda' (because), 'appidiyenda' (if), 'athala (so) or 'eppa' (when).

The child's early school years begin in five to seven years, and the language development continues faster because of the language learning opportunities with teachers and peers at school. At this stage, the child can tell stories.

> The conversational behaviours of normal Tamil-speaking male children in the age range of 3–5 and 7–9 years can be analysed under the following headings: (1) topic initiation, (2) topic maintenance, (3) request for repair, (4) conversation repair, (5) nonverbal behaviour, and (6) topic termination. The results show that the younger children (3–5 years) dyad compared to the older children (7–9 years) dyad indicates a significant difference in orientation under topic initiation, conversation information under topic maintenance, responding to requests under conversation repair, and nonverbal behaviour. On the other hand, discontinuous turns and abrupt topic terminations are present only with the younger group dyad. (Adapted from Harinath & Raghunathan, 2017).

Accordingly, this research involves a child belonging to this age range. In children's stories, words are joined and coined differently, generating different types of sentences. Often, the children come up with ideas and opinions. Thus, the process of child language acquisition or development is almost complete by eight years, and adult-like conversations become a reality with them.

LITERATURE REVIEW

While a child's first language acquisition is natural and spontaneous, human language development culminates in intellectual achievement (Pinker, 1984). The grammar of a language is identifiable by its vocabulary size and composition (Bates *et al*., 1994) and there is no need for direct instruction or intentional conversations (Pye, 1986: pp. 85-100) as cognitive maturity influences early language acquisition changes, especially in the qualitative and quantitative shifts in word learning (Gentner, 1982). As this paper involves a case study on a Tamil child's language development, it is important to have an idea about the structure of the Tamil language.

> "The Tamil language is one of the classical languages in the world. It is ranked 20th in the anthropology list of the most spoken languages worldwide" (Munas & Zunoomy, 2021: pp. 951-955) and "it is a morphologically rich, agglutinating, suffixal, and diglossic language with many regional vernacular variants and a 'high' or codified variety" (Sarma, 2013: p.110).

According to this study, the CLA covers 'the major grammatical categories of Tamil'. Pope (1859) as cited by Rajendran (2015 a) mentions "nouns by four features: class, division, person and case, classes by two, rational and irrational, five divisions; masculine, feminine, rational-plural, irrational-singular, and irrational-plural, numbers by singular and plural number and persons; the first, second, and the third. Cases are seven in number; nominative, accusative, sociative, dative, ablative, instrumental and locative." This study demonstrates some of these aspects.

The acquisition order and competence levels are not the same in all language communities. According to Nirmala & Kalpana (2015), in Tamil, the rules create new words under eight categories: noun to noun, verb to noun, adjective to noun, noun to verb, adjective to verb, verb to verb, noun to adjective, verb to adverb. Word formation techniques represent a pre-processing stage of noun and verb morphological operations in Tamil grammar and linguistics. However, there are standard features and processes applicable to all languages as languages differ in their vocabulary richness and diversity and grammatical flexibility and complexity. A child is supposed to follow unintentionally linguistic rules in phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics (Sandler & Lillo-Martin, 2006).

Another important area in CLA is the child's capacity to internalise phonological rules and processes. The phonology of Tamil has "retroflex consonants and strict rules for the distribution within words of voiced and unvoiced plosives. It permits few consonant clusters, which can never be word initials. The phonemes include vowels, consonants, and a "secondary character", the *āytam*. The vowels are classified as short (kuṟil) vowels and long (five of each type) vowels and the two diphthongs, /ai/ and /au/, and the three "shortened" (kuṟṟiyal) vowels. The long (neṭil) vowels are about twice the length of the short vowels. The consonants are classified into three categories, with six in each category: *valliṉam*—hard, *melliṉam*—soft or Nasal, and

iṭayiṉam—medium." (Kanapathy, 2015). The current study unveils the child's ability to use consonant clusters.

> "The common patterns of grammar in Tamil is particular to the phonological acquisition. Successful acquisition of phonological contrasts presupposes their accurate perception. There is a variation in the *degree* of difficulty. It is doubtful whether it could be easier for a learner if this feature would instead delay or disturb the acquisition. There is a clear asymmetric pattern of acquisition of Tamil phonology by sound compared to the form or structure. The learner can identify the correct form or structure of the two vowels /ai/ and /ao/by sound. Acquiring the non-identical or new vowels is possible through sound by identifying the forms than saying them out. The children acquire the long vowels in the L1" (Adapted from Kanapathy, 2015).

> "Sri Lankan Tamil children experience late acquisition of / ʃ /, /h/ and early mastery of /c/, / ɻ /, /r/. They demonstrate Language universal (fronting, stopping) and language-specific (lateralisation, replacing /g/ for /h/ and /k/ for /h/). These processes are evident among Sri Lankan Tamils. There is a statistical significance of age and social dialectal variation on phonological measures" (Saleem *et al*., 2018).

> In exploratory research on isolated cases of early childhood language acquisition processes followed by children growing under the circumstance of inadequate language input (Candland, 1993), it is found that children start oral communication with nouns or subjects and proceed to acquire predicates at a later stage. While acquiring the Tamil language which has 'significantly more inflectional morphology compared to English' (Sandler & LilloMartin, 2006), it is noted that, at this age, the children can reliably produce 50–100 words, with the possibility for picking up close or grammatical words at a later stage (Anderson & Reilly, 2002).

In CLA research on Tamil verbs, it is found that,

> "the verb consists of the following things: root, personal terminations, three persons, five divisions, tenses, imperative mood, optative mood, two participles, negative form, and verbal noun. A verbal noun is a noun formed by adding *tal, al* or *kai* to the root of a verb. Adjectives and adverbs in Tamil are syntactically recognised categories. They are not decided by the type of inflexion they receive; rather, they are identified by their function in the sentential construction." Pope (1859) cited by Rajendran (2015 a).

The categorisation of Tamil verbs can be explained in the following terms:

> "A verb form gets inflected by suffixes based on person, count, tense and voice. These suffixes are identified by reverse splitting, and the word is tagged as verb. The implementation involves a rule-based suffix stripping method for identifying verbs where suffixes are checked with grammatical rules and tagged as verbs. The proposed implementation uses the traditional way of identifying a word based on Tamil grammar rules, thus avoiding transliteration" (Evangeline & Shyamala 2020).

Based on the CLA models that range between the nativist and empiricist approaches, the present research is conducted. The usage-based "verb island" hypothesis formulated by Tomasello (2000) confirms a gradual syntactic knowledge acquisition beginning with memorised two- or three-word structures. Accordingly, in this research, it is understood that the child in question also communicates in similar sentence structures. However, it is observed that morphological structure development across verbs takes a slow process.

Acquiring time and tense in the Tamil language is another distinct development in CLA.

> "As in English, in Tamil also there is a strict one-to-one correspondence between time and tense. Palmer (1984) points out that are only two tenses in English: present and past. Other verbal categories like the perfect and progressive aspects are achieved using the auxiliaries *be* and *have*. English does not have any verbal inflexion for future tense. The forms *shall* and *will* are used for indicating the future time, but they are also used for functions other than future time references, like willingness, probability and general truth. So it is right to say that English has no future tense. In Tamil, there are three marked tenses, the present, the past and the future. There are distinct inflectional verbal forms for the three tenses. For example, Present Tense: Tense Marker: *Kiru/ kira (varukiraan* - He is coming*);* Past Tense: *ith* (*paditha*n - He studied*); itt (kettaan* - He asked*);* Future Tense: *uv (varuvaan* - He will come*) ipp (kuthippan* - He will jump). There is varying sentence equivalence for the two aspects of the

> English structures in their combination with tense and voice. While there is Tamil equivalence in the active voice, it is challenging to find similar equivalence in the passive voice. Even in English, the table cannot be complete. In English, modal verbs or modals are available to express various modalities. However, in Tamil, there is no such grammatical category. Anyhow, some morphemes or words do the functions of the modal verbs." (Dinakaran, 2018).

CLA literature reveals that it is natural for children to make language errors and that adults do not show much interest in correcting them intentionally as they do not like corrections. This is evident in McNeill's popular anecdotal account on a child's resistance to error correction where the child complains, 'Nobody don't like me' (McNeill, 1970).

In the Tamil language, inflectional morphology or verbal inflectional morphology is another area of uniqueness. Sarma (2013) says that the verb is the repository of key grammatical functions and is structurally and functionally highly complex and is also the key determinant of argument structure which is particularly interesting in the context of language acquisition.

> "Verbal inflectional morphology is critical to furthering our understanding of language acquisition. It has a range of cross-linguistic features that are encoded in inflectional systems and how the components of morphology, syntax, semantics and phonology interface. Studying the acquisition of these features allows linguists and psycholinguists to deduce the mechanisms that drive language learning and to distinguish between universal and language-specific patterns in acquisition" (Sarma, 2013).

It is observed that the highly inflected verbs in Tamil leave the child to acquire the nouns first. However, during language development, the noun-dependence syndrome becomes extinct when the child reaches maturity in using more predicates and grammatical words or morphemes.

> "[Tamil is] a morpheme-based language. It has enormous vocabulary growth caused by many different forms derived from one word. The vocabulary size can be reduced by dividing words into stems and endings. The language has ambiguities in the recognised Tamil words" (Saraswathi & Geetha, 2010).

Another area of the Tamil linguistic system is morpho-phonology. Learning and use of these features demonstrate the acquisition.

> "Various morpho-phonological studies with methodological approaches, including generative, derivative, lexical phonology and constraint-based studies, have applied data from the spoken and Literary Tamil" (Dass, 2016).

> "Tolka:ppiyam, the earliest grammar extent of the Tamil language, explains Tamil morphophonology and its functional roles. It introduced the morphological and phonological mechanisms involved in modifying the interfaces. Further, the manual also offered some notes on the nature of Morpho-syntax behaviour. It describes *punariyal*, (sandhi), *tokaimarapu* (compound word formation), *uyirmayangkiyal* (epenthesis and other matter related to vowels in word formation), *pullimayangkiyal*, (epenthesis and other matter related to vowels in word formation). There are at least three possible ways of classifying the sandhi; case-related classification, Interactive point-based classification and Noun-Verbs based classification" (Dass, 2016).

Another feature noted in Tamil is lexical and syntactic joint development despite the fact that acquisition lacks language modality (Bates *et al*., 1994). A constituent analysis of Tamil sentences and phrases is meant to reveal these interesting features.

> "An adequate linguistic analysis must be not only able to generate all the well-formed sentences we find in a language but also be able to show the relationship between various constituents of sentences. For example, expressions like (10) *avan mahan* 'He (is a) son' and (11) *avan mahan* 'his son' are widespread in many natural languages and the relationship between *avan* and *mahan* in the above two expressions must be clearly indicated by any linguistic analysis. This is being done by labelling various expressions as sentences, noun phrase, verb phrase, etc. *avan mahan* 'he is a son' is a sentence where *avan* and *mahan* are the subject and the predicate respectively. However, in the case of *avan mahan* 'his son' *avan* and *mahan* are in attribute (genitive) - head noun relation, and they form a noun phrase (NP)" Agestilingom (1969).

Munas & Zunoomy (2021: pp. 951-955), having researched Tamil sentence structure concerning language learning and acquisition, claim that "Tamil has Nominal sentence only. It includes three sentence patterns: simple, compound, and complex." Siromoney (1971: pp. 508-518) describes kernel sentences 1) without an object: a subject (SUB), Verb (VEB) and a time-marker (TIM) and can be written as SUB + TIM + VEB. For example, *mayil* (peacock) *neytru* (yesterday) *addiyatu* (danced). 2) Without object: SUB + VEB + OBJECT + TIM. 3) Other types. Rajendran (2015 b) investigates the Tamil clause components in language acquisition.

> "In Tamil, two clauses are combined in coordination by coordinating elements and in subordination by using nonfinite and infinite verb forms. In Tamil, coordination refers to the conjoining two or more elements of the equal categorical status of the three syntactic levels – word, phrasal, and sentential – to one conjoined structure in which all elements have equal status or rank. Words, phrases, and clauses are coordinated by coordinating morphemes referred to as coordinators, which express the semantic (logical) connections between the elements conjoined. Tamil employs two types of coordinators. In one type of coordination, the clitics *-um* 'and', *-oo* 'or', and *–aa* 'whether; or', occur after each element is conjoined. In other coordination-free forms, such as *allatu* 'or', *illaiyaanaal* 'or' and *aanaal* 'but', coordinating conjunctions occur between the elements conjoined. Tamil has a large system of complex sentence formation involving subordination. Subordination takes place by embedding or adjoining a clause into another sentence. In subordination, the categories which occur as head of a subordinate clause in Tamil are postpositions; verbs and the clause itself. Thus a clause can be embedded into a clause to the left side of a clause by subordination. Tamil does not have a proper subordinator. The postpositions added to the infinitive and nominalised form of verbs act as subordinators. Different types of inflexions on the Verb convert a clause to a subordinate clause," (Rajendran, 2015).

In a brief analysis of the form and function of the pronouns in Batticaloa Tamil (BT), a major socio-regional dialects of Tamils in Sri Lanka, Suseendirarajah (1973) treats the forms derived from the demonstrative and the interrogative bases, and the geographical distribution of their linguistic forms and usages, and claims that there are two types of pronouns in BT: 1) which includes the first person, second person, and reflexive pronouns, does not show any gender distinction; and 2) which shows gender distinction except in the case of *aar* (who).

In an investigation into the use of negation by a Turkish-speaking child in the very early stages of language acquisition, the following claim is made and its finding supports the present study.

> "The child not only starts to use most forms of negation as early as age of 1-10 but also does this strategically by performing them for successful communication in a clear developmental sequence such as using various sets, complementing one negative form with the other to emphasise his point and providing reasons and results for his statements. As a result, the child acquires the forms from more independent to the dependent and a sequence from the easy to the linguistically and cognitively more challenging" (İnci Kavak, 2019).

The various negations in Tamil suggest that there may be a variety of negative elements in universal grammar that have collapsed into the single English negative *not*; and this may be part of the acquisition problem. The data from Deprez & Pierce (1993) show child utterances with *no* corresponding to negation with *ille* as well as to negation "with the intended meaning of denial or rejection" expressed in Tamil by *veeNDaam* 'don't want'" (Ramadoss & Amritavalli 2007).

All children do not show the same potential in developing functional language skills, and some children need speech therapy or clinical treatment. However, by studying acquisition problems, one can explain the language acquisition process and facilitate expedited language acquisition (Cicchetti & Rogosch, 1996: pp. 597-896). During the first eight years, the children show practical skills at all linguistic levels. In exposure to CLA-rich situations.

The language teachers or parents' complex use of language deprives the language teachers of the opportunity of performing the direct training of language in stages. The nativist or innate school experts state that the connection between the language development and the growth or unfolding of an innate language faculty is similar to that of any physical development (Fodor, 1983).

> "The speaker must know many pragmatic elements to develop the coherency and the ability to react in different situations. Pragmatics studies how context contributes to meaning. It also includes speech acts, conversational utterances and talk in interaction. Pragmatic language refers to social

> language skills or social communication. The pragmatic skill also includes using the language at the appropriate time; knowing when to answer a question asked from the learners; being able to participate in a conversation with the other speaker; the awareness to introduce a topic, and makes it sure that the listener understood it; the ability to maintain a particular topic" (Abilasha & Ilankumaran, 2018).

The present research examines the pragmatic aspects of CLA in relation to Tamil children along these lines. Semantics is the meaning and the relationship between the word use and its functions in language.

> "The primary meaning is the dictionary meaning of the word and also designative meaning. If a word has only one meaning, it can easily be said that it does not exist in terms of usage (Polysemy, Synonymy, and Homonymy). The pragmatic meaning of the semantic area is particularly connotative; that needs to be explored and explained in the linguistic context. What kind of words, in what sense are they used, who, for what, where are they used" (Ramesh Kumar, 2021).

This article explores and explains the meaning acquisition in Tamil CLA.

> "Children's native language and culture influence the discourse production, particularly narratives. There is a clear understanding of their performance during extensive discourse level is still lacking in children with multilingual exposure, the results indicated that the majority of the participants had a clear beginning while using simple and compound narratives, except very few had difficulty in the sequencing of events and resolution of problem with a clear ending. Children 6-8 years old in the urban primary school acquire syntactic and semantic diversity in story retelling and self-narrative tasks. There can be differences between urban and rural society in performance while controlling the children's and parents' socio-economic status" (Ravichandran *et al*., 2020).

> The present study explains the bilingual expressions and code-mixing in Tamil CLA. Krishnasamy (2015) investigates the nature of the language behaviour of Tamil-English bilingual children. This study sheds some light on this aspect. Language mixing is an advanced form of bilingual communication (Poplack, 1980).

The significance of the study

The current study explores early first-language acquisition scientifically in line with the existing theories and approaches: their vocabulary size, diversity, composition, sentence types, fluency and accuracy. Therefore, it mainly contributes to social science and theoretical and applied linguistics and the findings enhance communication studies, speech therapy, anthropology, sociology, and psychology as linguistic studies are indispensable to multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary studies in social sciences.

> " The development of microstructure elements of narratives was the topic among the Tamil-speaking children aged between three and six years and eleven months. It then compares their narrative productivity across two elicitation contexts: story retelling (SR) and story generation (SG). Three parameters are the total number of words (TNW), the mean length of utterances (MLU) and the number of utterances. The results reveal an increasing trend in all three microstructure parameters across both contexts and quantitatively high in SR than in SG. Variation in the performance has been explained with behavioural observations from literature, cognitive architecture and a working memory model. The observations can be used to analyse the language deviance and help plan the narrative intervention protocol for language therapy" (Venkatraman & Thiruvalluvan, 2021).

Similar to the above findings by Venkatraman & Thiruvalluvan's (2021), this research explores the child's potential for acquisition, creativity, development, and application of most of the significant linguistic features in the Tamil language. They are voicing, internal and external sandhis, consonant clusters, phonological assimilation, morphological affixation, conjunctions, plural morphemes, elliptical expression and the critical sentence pattern, verb inflexion, semantic generalisation, semantic redundancy, contextual appropriateness and communicative intention, and pragmatic interpretation. Thus, this research contributes significantly to proving that the child has achieved significant management and internalisation of the linguistic systems of his mother tongue.

This paper creates another question in studying linguistic isolation and CLA. It has not been systematically investigated. Nevertheless, it is theoretically relevant to this paper. Research on that line can clarify the status

of CLA deterred by child isolation, abuse, or cognitive immaturity. It can enlighten on the causes of late L1 (first language) acquisition's harmful effects on adult language processing (Mayberry, 2007).

Children are creative in the contexts of linguistic constraints or biases according to the principle of "mutual exclusivity." It states that new ideas need new words (Markman, 1990). The growing familiarity with the language is another conducive factor (Gillette *et al*., 1999). However, these ideas have not been scientifically verified. The current study investigates one case of a six-year-old child.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives

This paper investigates the CLA of a Sri Lankan Tamil child in acquiring Tamil as his first language. The analysis contributes to the studies in Tamil CLA, development and use and Tamil linguistics in general. This research comes under the purview of social sciences such as linguistics, enhancing the interdisciplinary approaches such as sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics. It aims to identify, analyse and assess the child's language expressions in all five linguistic levels: phonological, morphological, syntactical, semantic and pragmatic

Primary data

The Tamil language utterances have been extracted from a source that begins as a conversation between the analyst and the six-year-old child, ending up in telling a story in the form of a monologue. Seventeen utterances extracted from the narrative have been used as the primary data, the child's complete text telling a story to the researcher in a conversation style. Next, the conversation was recorded, transcribed in Tamil text, and translated into English; the recordings were orthographically and phonetically transcribed in phonetic symbols.

The analyst purposely gives the words found within parentheses to complete the sentence or question so that the sentences may become intelligible and grammatically accurate. They were not uttered in the original conversation or monologue. Only the words given in bold letters have been uttered originally.

Analytical method

It was a qualitative analysis of a case study conducted in 2018 at an urban school in the Vavuniya District. It involves the non-numerical data of an audio text to understand the basic linguistic concepts, opinions, or experiences during the stages of Tamil CLA in the Sri Lankan context. The child uses a Northern Sri Lankan Tamil dialect. It gathers in-depth insights into the phenomenon of CLA and compares the expressions of the child with the standard or adult language. It resolves the differences and problems in the child language, proves the linguistic and communicative capacity of the child language at all five levels mentioned above, and is equally on par with the adult language in its structures and functions. Thus, it brings new ideas for CLA and development research in Sri Lankan context.

The researcher performed a linguistic analysis following a participatory method approved in the form of a conversation. The researcher began asking some introductory socialising questions. The child answered. Then the researcher asked him to tell the story. Then the child narrated the whole story. The researcher used to stimulate the child's memory and his linguistic, content, and formal schemas (Carrell, 1984) to continue and finish the story. For example, 'ok then' 'what happened next?, he identified and analysed the child's language expressions in all five linguistic levels: phonological, morphological, syntactical, semantic and pragmatic. The researcher confirmed the mentalist and TG Grammar theories of Chomsky. He exemplified many significant expressions under several linguistic features, rules and categories to fulfil the objectives and answer the research questions.

Abbreviations and Codes used in the analysis

The 17 utterances are coded as U1, U2, U3 *etc*., in the analysis and discussion. The first language is abbreviated as L1, and the second language is L2.

Research questions

Does L1 acquisition by a Tamil child of six years old or first grade demonstrate the necessary knowledge in Tamil to communicate thoughts and messages?

Does the child's performance incorporate all five levels of the Tamil linguistic system?

Does the child's progressive narrative language skill or process meet the communicable standard and intelligibility?

Analysis and findings

The 17 utterances of the child were taken. The original Tamil version is given in Tamil. Next, its phonetic transcription is given in IPA characters. The direct linear order of the sentence pattern is given as it

is found in the Tamil language **in English.** The modified English translation is given. The special symbols used here are/ ʊ /-postalveolar sound, examples / n̪ /, /d̪/, / t̪ /, / l̪ /; †-central close vowel; ɲ -palatal nasal sound; ̪-dental sound, for example / n̪/.

The Primary data analysis

1) The Original Tamil Version

01) அப்பா என்ன செய்துகொண்டு இருக்கிறார்?

(B)இஸ்னஸ்

2) Phonetic Transcription

02) Λppa: ennə seɪðɨkondɨ ɪrɪkɨrar?/

/ bɪsnəs /

3) Linear Order of the Tamil Version

03) . 01) காலம என்ன சாப்பிட்டீங்க?

ரீ குடிச்சன

4) Translation in English

04) **What is** (your) **father doing?**

Business

02. 01) எங்க படிக்கிறீங்க?

கொன்வென்ரில

02) / eŋgə padɪkɨri:ŋgə? /

/konventilə /

03) **where** (are you) **studying?**

(the) **conventat.**

04) **Where are** (you) **studying?**

At the convent.

03. 01) ரீலம என்ன சாப்பிட்டீங்க?

ரீ குடிச்சன்.

02) ka:læmə ennə sa:pɨt̪iŋgə?/

/ti: kuɖitʒtʒə̃n /

03) (the) **morning in / what** (did you) **eat?**

(I) **Tea drank.**

04**) What did** (you) **have in** (the) **morning?**

(I) **drank tea.**

04. 01) கதேட பேரச் சொல்லுங்க?

அது சிங்கமும் மிருகங்களும்

02) / kaðedə peːrə̆Ctʒɔllɨŋgə ?/

/ ʌðɨ sɪŋgʌmɨm mɪrɨhaŋgʌl̪ɨm /

03) (the) **story of** / (the) **name / tell**

That (is) , (a) **lion and** (the) **animals** (and).

04) **Tell** (the) **name of** (the) **story?**

That (is) , (a) **lion and** (the) **animals.**

05. 01) ஒரு நாள் ஒரு நாள் ஒரு சிங்கம் மரத்துக்கு. மரத்துக்குகீழ ஒளிஞ்சிருந்ததாம் கனக்க மிருகங்கள் வந்ததாம்.

02) /ɔruna:l̪ …… ɔruna:l̪ … ɔru sɪŋgʌm marʌθɨkkɨ …. marʌθɨkkɨ kɪ:l̪ə ɔl̪indʒɪrɪnðə̃ða:m. ʌppə kanakə mɪrɨhaŋgʌl̪ vʌn̪ðə̃ða:m. /

03) **One day.. one day … a lion ..** (a) **tree ..** (a) **tree.. under / was hiding several animals came** (there) (it is said so).

04) **One day.. one day a lion was hiding under** (a) **tree.. tree .. several animals came** (there) (it is said so).

06. 01) அதுகள் ..அதுகள் இந்ததண்ணி குடிக்கஎண்டு, குடிச்சிட்டுபோகேக்குள்ள சிங்கம் வந்து திண்டிட்டாம்.

02) /ʌðɨhʌl̪ …. ʌðɨhʌl̪ …. ɨnðə̃ ənn̪ikuɖɪkə̃ en̪ɖɨ, kuɖɪtʒtʒɨtɨ, pɔ:he:kul̪l̪ə̃ sɪŋgʌmvʌn̪ðɨ ən̪ɖɨt̪t̪aɪm ./

03) **those** (animals) … **Those** (animals) / **this water .. / drink to / having drunk,** [and when they] **were going,** (a) **lion came** (and) **ate** (it is said so).

04) **Those** (animals) … **Those** (animals) (came) **to drink the water, having drunk** (and when) **they were going,** (a) **lion came** (and) **ate** (it is said so).

07. 01) ஒரு நாள் ஒரு காட்டில் இருந்து வசித்து

வந்ததாம் முயல்,யானை எல்லாம்.

02) /ɔruna:l̪ … ɔruka:ʈʈɪl̪ə ɪrɪn̪ðɪ vasiɵɪ vaɳðə̪ðə̪a:m muyal ja:nə̪ ella:m. /

03) **one day .. / ajungle in /, from** (a jungle), **was living** (it is said so) (a) **hare** (an) **elephant, all** (of them).

04) **One day … in a jungle, from**(a jungle) **were living** (it is said so) (a) **here** (an) **elephant, all** (of them).

08. 01)அவங்க ஒண்டாசேர்ந்து ராஜாட்ட போவம் எண்டு சிங்க ராஜாவிட்ட போனாங்களாம்.

02) /avʌɳgʌl̪- ɔn̪d̪a: se:n̪ðɪ ra:ja:ʈʈə̪ pɔ:vʌmə̪n̪d̪ɪ sɪŋgə̪ raɪja:vɪʈʈə̪ pɔ:na:ŋgʌl̪a:m/

03) **they … together … joined ..,** (and said) "(the) **king to /go let us"** (and) (the) **lion king to** (they) **went** (it is said so).

04) **They joined together,** (said) **" let us go to** (the) **king"** (and) **they went** (it is said so) **to** (the) **lion king.**

09. 01) ஆ சிங்க சிங்கராஜாவே, சிங்கராஜாவே உங்களுக்கு ஒரு மணிக்கு நாங்கள் சாப்பாடு கொண்ணந்து தருவம் எங்களை நீங்கள் மகிழ்வித்தீர்கள்.

02) /a: … sɪŋgə̪ ..sɪŋgə̪ ra:ja:ve sɪŋgə̪ ra:ja:ve ɯŋgʌl̪ɪkkɪ ɔru manɨkkɪ na:ŋgʌl̪ sa:ppadɪ kɔn̪n̪ʌn̪ðɪ ɵaruvʌm eŋgʌl̪aɪ ni:ŋgʌl̪ mahɪl̪vɪɵɵɪ:rhʌl̪ ./

03) "**ah lion … lion king! Oh lion king ! / you to / one O'clock …. to, / we food will bring / us you pleased".**

04) **" oh … lion …. lion king! Oh, lion king! We will bring you food at one O'clock** (so by accepting this) **you please us,**

10. 01) அப்ப நாளைக்கு முயல விட்டாங்களாம்.

02) / ʌppə̪ na:l̪aɪkkɪ muyalə̪ vɪʈʈa:ŋgʌl̪a:m /

03) **so tomorrow… to** / (the) **hare** (they) **let** (to go …. It is said so).

04) **So the following day,** (the animals) **sent the hare** (to the king).

11. 01) முயல் வாறவழியில சரியான கலைப்பாம் அப்போ ஒரு மரத்துக்கு கீழபடுத்திட்டாம்.

02)/ muyal va:rə̪ val̪iilə̪ saria:nə̪ kalaippa:m ʌppo ɔru marʌɵɵɪkkɪ kɪl̪ə̪ paɖɪɵɵɪʈʈa:m /

03) (the) **hare** (the) **coming way… on /** (was) **too tired** (it is said so); **therefore… a tree of under…/ slept ….** (it is said so).

04) **The hare was too tired on** (its) **way: so** (it) **slept under a tree**.

12. 01) பின்னேரம் ஆகினோன திடிரெண்டு எழும்பிச்சாம் எழும்பினோன முழிச்சிப் பாத்து ரைம் பாக்கேக்குள்ள நாலுமணி ஆயிற்றாம்.

02) pɪnne:rama:hinɔ:n̪ə̪ ɵɪd̪i:ten̪d̪ɪ eɻɪmpɪʈʒʈʒa:m eɻɪmpinɔ:nə̪ …. ə̪h … mul̪ɪʈʒʈʒɪppa:ɵɵɪ … taimə̪ pa:kke:kkul̪l̪ə̪ na:lɪ man̪i a:yitta:m./

03) (the) **evening** (when) **became,** (it) **suddenly awoke… having awakened…., eh… opened** (its) **yes and saw … looking** (the) **time……. at**/ (it was) **4 O'clock** (it is said so).

04) **When the evening came, the hare suddenly awake and looked at the time.** (it was) **4 O'clock.**

13. 01) ஓடியோடிப் போய் கால்ல விழுந்துதாம் சிங்கத்திர கால்ல.

02) /ɐ:dijɔ:dippɔɪj kallə̪ vil̪ɪn̪ðɪða:m sɪŋgʌɵɵɪrə̪ kallə̪ /.

03) (it) **ran**(and) **ran… having gone ….** (the) **foot… at / fell** (down it is said so), (the) **lions foot … at.**

04) **it ran there and fell down at the feet of the lion.**

14) 01) அப்ப சிங்கம் சொல்லிச்சாம் ஏன் இவ்வளவு லேற் எண்டு.

02) / ʌppə̪ sɪŋgʌm sɔllɪtʒʈʒa:m e:n ɪvvʌl̪avɪ le:en̪d̪ɪ /

03) **then** (the) **lion told** (it is said so)…. **why** (the hare was) **so late** (that).

04) **Then the lion told that why** (the hare was) **so late.**

15. 01) முயல் சொல்லிச்சாம ஒருசிங்கம் வர்றவழியில, ஒரு சிங்கம் ஒண்டு(ம்) லசிச்சு வந்திருக்கேக்குள்ள அது என்ன நித்திரகொள்ளவிட்டிட்டு அந்த சிங்கம் நித்திரகொண்டோண்ண நான் எழும்பி வந்திற்றன் எண்டு பிறகு அ அ சிங்க சிங்கத்த சிங்கத்திட்ட சொல்லிச்சாம் எங்க என்ன மாதிரி ஒரு ராஜா இல்ல இந்தக் காட்டில.

02) /muyal sɔllitʒtʒa:m … ɔru… sɪŋgʌm ..varrə̹ vaḻiilə̹ ,ɔru sɪŋgʌmɔn̪d̪ɨ vasɪθəɨ va:n̪ðirɨkke:kkull̪ə̹ ʌðɨ ennə̹ nɪθəirə̹ koll̪ə̹ viʈ̪ɨttɨ … ʌn̪ðə̹ sɪŋgʌm nɪθəirə̹ kon̪d̪ɔ:ɳɳə̹ … na:n eḻɨmpi van̪ðit an … en̪d̪ɨ … pirahɨ …. a.. a. siŋgə̹ … siŋgʌɵ … siŋgʌθəiʈ̪ə̹ sɔllitʒtʒa:m

03) (the) **here told** (it is said so)…**a lion …** (the) **coming way .. on / , a lion one…** (when) **was living… , it… me… sleep .. let** (and) **that lion ..having slept.. I got up** (and) **came** (here) **that … then…. eh..eh.. the lio… lion's** (the) **lion to / ..**(the hare) **told** (it is said so)…**Where..me.. like… a king** (was) **not this jungle …. in.**

04) (The) **hare told** (that) **a lion was living on its way. It let me sleep after that the lion had slept. I got up and came … then … eh … eh … the lion told that hare** (that) **there** (was) **not any king other than me in this jungle.**

16. 01) முயல் சொல்லிச்சி இருக்காம் எண்டு என்னைக் கூட்டிக்கொண்டுபோய்க் காட்டெண்டு சிங்கம் சொல்லிச்சாம்.

02) / muyal sɔllitʒtʒɨ ɪyɨkka:men̪d̪ɨ ennaik ku:ʈ̪ɪkkɔn̪d̪ɨpɔ:yk ka:ʈ̪ʈ̪en̪d̪ɨ siŋgʌm sɔllitʒtʒa:m./

03) (the) **hare told** (that there) **was** (one it is said so) **"me take** (and) **go** (and) **show"** (the) **lion told** (it is said so).

04) (the) **hare told** (that there) **was one.**(the) **lion said 'take me** (there and) **show me** (that) **lion.'**

17. 01) அப்ப ஒரு கிணத்துக்குள்ள அ கொண்டுபோய் காட்டேக்குள்ள அதிர நிழல் தெரிஞ்சிதாம் அப்ப இதுக்குள்ள சிங்கம் இருக்கண்டு தெரிதெரிஞ்சிட்டாம். அப்ப அந்த சிங்கம் தண்ணிக்குள்ள குதிச்சிட்டாம். கிணத்துக்குள்ள அ கிணத்துக்குள்ள குதிச்சோண்ண அ கிணத்துக்குள்ள குதிச்சோண்ண அ கிணத்துக்குள்ள குதிச்சோண்ண செத்திற்றாம்.

02) /ʌppə̹ ɔru kɪn̪aɵɵɨkkull̪ə̹ … a..kɔn̪d̪ɨ pɔ:y kaʈ̪ e:kkull̪ə̹… ʌðɪrə̹ nɨḻʌḻ ɵeriɲjɨðа:m. ʌppə̹ .. iðɨkkull̪ə̹ siŋgʌm ɪrɨkken̪d̪ɨ ɵeri … ɵeriɲjɨʈ̪ʈ̪a:m. ʌppə̹ ʌn̪ðə̹ siŋgʌm ɵaɲɲikkull̪ə̹ kuɵuitʒtʒiʈ̪ʈ̪a:m. kɪn̪aɵɵɨkkull̪ə̹ …. a …. kɪn̪aɵɵɨkkull̪ə̹ kuðitʒtʒɔ:ɳɳə̹. .. a kɪn̪aɵɵɨkkull̪ə̹ kuðɪtʒtʒɔ:ɳɳə̹ … seɵɵitta:m.

03) **then .. a well … into / eh..** (it) **took**(the lion) (and) **showed** (when) **…, its shadow appeared…** (it is said so) **then … this … into / a lion was** (the lion) **know.. had known. then that lion …** (the) **water … into / … eh.. had jumped.** (it is said so) **eh** (the) **well … into / eh** (the) **well into ../.. having jumped once … eh** (the) **well into …/.. having jumped,** (it) **had died.**

04) **Then the hare took the lion** (into the jungle and when it) **showed a well and** (the lion looked into it) **its reflection was seen** (it is said so) **then the lion thought that there was another lion into the water. Therefore it jumped** (into the well it is said so) **and died.**

Analysis at the phonological level

Rajakumari *et al.* (2018) researched a "number of phonological processes. It was more in bilinguals when compared to monolinguals among the Tamil students. The phonological processes like stopping, deaffrication, alveolarisation, and depalatalisation were exhibited only by bilingual Tamil and English-speaking children and were not found among monolingual Tamil-speaking children. Similarly, the phonological processes like fronting, velar assimilation, prevocalic voicing, medial consonant deletion and weak syllable deletion were seen only in monolingual Tamil speaking children and not in the Tamil and English-speaking bilingual children. In addition, the phonological processes like backing, gliding, affrication, labialisation, cluster reduction, epenthesis, final consonant deletion and initial consonant deletion were common in both." In this research, the child performs naturally in Voicing, /u / →/ɨ/ conversion, internal and external Sandhi, consonant clusters and assimilation.

Voicing is not a distinctive feature

The child answers using an English word in U1. It pronounces the word 'business' as /bisnə̹s/. The voiced alveolar fricative /-Z/ is replaced by the voiceless alveolar fricative /-s/. The Tamil language does not have voicing as a phonological feature to distinguish the phonemes. Therefore, both /-Z/ and /-S/ are the same for the child. They are allophonic variations of the Tamil phoneme /-S/.

1.1. /u / →/ɨ/

Throughout most of the utterances, the child uses/-ɨ/ in his speech. However, in standard Tamil, the phoneme /u/ is pronounced but in spoken Tamil, /ɨ/ is used. So, the child also uses the same in U4. /ʌðu/ becomes /ʌðɨ/, /siŋgʌmu̪m/ becomes /siŋgʌmɨm/etc.,

Internal and external sandhi

The child properly handles both internal and external sandhi (U5). /marʌm/+ /-kɨ/ becomes /marʌ + ɵɵɨk + kɨ/ = /marʌ + ɵɵɨk + kɨ/. It is an example of internal sandhi. On the other hand, /ɔl̪iɳ̪ðɨ/ + /irɨɳ̪ððɨ/ + /a:m/ becomes /ɔl̪iɲdʒɨrɨɳ̪ðð̪a:m/. Here /nð/ becomes /ɲdʒ/. Simultaneously, the /-I/ of the morpheme /-ɨ / is deleted. Further, the last vowel phoneme /irɨɳ̪ðð̪ɨ/ of the morpheme is also deleted. It is called external sandhi. The adults also do the same. It becomes clear that the child at this age (six and a half years old) has acquired his skill significantly.

An exciting thing has happened in U8. First, the child uses the prepositional phrase /ra:ja: + tt̪ð/; later, because of the influence of the standard Tamil, it repeats as /ra:ja: + vɨ + tt̪ð/, for, in standard Tamil, it will be as /ra:ja: + vɨdam/. So, the child derives the phoneme /vɨ/ from the standard Tamil and attaches them with the spoken post-positional ending /-tt̪ð /. L1 (first language)

Both the internal and external sandhis fall on the same word in U13: /ɔ:dijɔ:dippɔ:y/, that is, /ɐ:di + ɐdi + pɔ:j/ insertion of the phoneme /j/ and the change of the phoneme /ɐ:/ into /ɔ:/ are the example for internal santhi. The insertion of an additional /-p /is an example of external sandhi.

Consonant clusters

The child has acquired and used the consonantal clusters of the Tamil language in U6 and U8. The words, /eɳ̪dɨ/ and /se:ɳ̪ðɨ/ are significant. In the first word, both /ɳ̪/and /d̪/ are postalveolar consonants. In the second, both /ɳ̪/ and /ð/ are dental consonants. In Tamil, /ɳ̪d̪/ and /ɳ̪ð/ are clusters. In addition to these sounds, the widespread cluster throughout all the utterances of the child is /ŋg/ found in /avʌŋgʌl̪/, /sɪŋgð/etc.

Assimilation

The plural suffixes /gʌl̪/ and /hʌl̪/ of the words / ni:ŋgʌl̪ mahɨl̪vɪɵɵɪ:rhʌl̪/ are significant in U9. Both are allomorphs of the plural morpheme, /-gʌl̪/. Further, in Tamil, as already stated, voicing is not a distinctive feather for contrasting phonemes. The sounds, /g/, /k/ and /h/ are the allophones of the phoneme /k/. Here, in this utterance, /k/ is assimilated to /g/ to cluster with /ŋ/ in the utterance, /ni:ŋgʌl̪/. The phoneme, /k/ is assimilated to /h/ to cluster with /r/ in the utterance, /mahɨl̪vɪɵɵɪ:rhʌl̪/.

The Analysis at the Morphological Level

Affixation

The child, in its answer, uses an English word affixed with a Tamil case suffix /-ilð/ (equal to 'at') in U2. It indicates the child's morphological knowledge of using the suffix /-ilð/ and where to use it.

Morphemes indicating tenses

The child knows the morphological information of the different morphemes indicating the tenses (U3). In between the morphemes /kut̪i-/ (the root) and /-ðn/, the morpheme /-tʒtʒ/ is used to indicate the past tense, and the morpheme /-pp-/ to indicate the future tense, and the morpheme /-kkɪr/ to indicate the present tense. Here, the child correctly uses the morpheme, indicating the past tense.

Overgeneralisation takes place in U9. The story is narrated in the past tense, but there are direct conversations between the lion and the animals or the hare. When a request is made, the animals use the present tense though the conversation was in the past. The animals use the past tense verb in the second person narrative. They use / eŋgn̪laɪ ni:ŋgʌl̪ mahɨl̪vɪɵɵɪ:rhʌl̪/ (you pleased us), but the basic form should be /mahɨl̪vijɨŋgʌl̪ / ("you please us" or "you make us happy"). The child has extended the use of the past tense bound morpheme, /ɵɵi:r/, to the present tense use of direct speech. It has replaced the correct bound morpheme of the present tense or imperative / jɨŋ/. The child has over-generalised the use of /ɵɵi:r/. Here, the child thinks that although it is a direct request of the present tense, the story happened in the past, so the request is mistakenly changed into a past incident statement.

Morpheme indicating conjunction

The child correctly uses the morpheme indicating the conjunction 'and' in U4. In Tamil, the suffix /-ɨm/ is used in both words to indicate this conjunction, unlike the English use of the word 'and.' It is noticeable in the utterance, /siŋgʌmɨm mirɨhaŋgʌl̪ɨm./

Morpheme indicating word classes

The child repeats the word /marʌɵɵɨkkɨ/ to verify its morphological use of /- ɵɵɨkkɨ/ in U5. It is similar to the usage of the English prepositions `of' and `to'. The word, /marʌm/ means `tree'. The child tactfully deletes

the noun suffix/-m/ to attach the case suffix /-ɵɵɨkkɨ/ to use another morpheme suffix, /-kɨl̪∂/ (`under'). In Tamil, to use the morphological suffix /-kɨl̪a/, the noun word should be inflected with the suffix /-kɨ/. The rest of the phonemic cluster in /-ɵɵɨk/ is a morpho-phonological change to join /marʌm/ and /-kɨ/. When the phoneme /m/ is deleted from a noun, naturally, /-ɵɵɨ/ is infixed morpho-phonologically in the Tamil language. It is a generalised rule connecting the morphological suffix /-kɨ/.

The child expresses his skill in using morphemes to change a noun into an adjective (U8) and (U9). It changes the noun, /siŋgʌm/ into the adjective, /siŋg∂/ to join with the noun having the dative case at the end in the utterance, /ra:ja: + vɨt̪t̪∂/. In this process, the morph, /ʌm/ becomes /-∂-/ The phoneme, /m/ is omitted and /ʌ/becomes /∂/. It is a common feature in Tamil; for example, the noun utterance /marʌm/`tree' becomes the adjectival utterance /mara/ `tree.'

Morphemes indicating plurality

In the noun phrase, /kanak∂ mirɨhaŋ̪gʌl̪/, the plural suffix, /gʌl̪/ is correctly attached to the noun/mirɨham/ (animal) to agree with the adjective, /kanak∂/ (Many) in U5. However, at the same time, the child has made an error in forming the plural suffix to the Verb, /vʌn̪ðəða:m/. The correct verb should be /vʌn̪ð∂/ +/na/ + /v/ + /a:m/ =/vʌnð∂navaɪm/. So, instead of /na/, the child has given /-ð/, a suffix denoting singularity. The morph, /na/ is the plural morpheme. The morph, /-v-/ is inserted naturally in joining the morphs, / vnŋ̪ð∂na/and /a:m/. The morph, /-a:m/, means `it is said so,' which means, "somebody told this piece of information; now I am repeating what was told me."

The child has made the same mistake in U7. So, it is clear that still, the child has some problems using the correct plural morpheme in the Tamil language verb system.

Another example is the child's inability to use the plural form in U13. The child uses the singular morpheme, /ka:l/ + /l∂/ instead of /ka:l/ + /hʌl̪/ +/-l∂/. Here, the morpheme /hʌl̪// is the plural morpheme.

The analysis at the syntactic level

Laxmanen (2000) conducted a "cross-sectional study that investigated the acquisition of relative clauses by 27 Tamil-speaking children, in the age group 2 – 6 and 7-11. A picture-cued production task revealed that children below the age of 5 relativised significantly less often than the older children; they exhibited a strong preference for the tag relative and produced significantly fewer participial relatives than the older children. The findings also indicated that the younger children produced a significantly greater number of pragmatically inappropriate responses than the older children. It is argued that the observed age-related differences in Tamil children's relativisations likely stem from performance factors and that the younger children are probably not inferior to the older children regarding their grammatical and pragmatic competence." This research also exhibits similar characteristics in elliptical expression and the key sentence pattern, reversion of subject-verb order and its disagreement, prepositions in English functionally as inflectional suffixes in Tamil, The positions and functions of suffixes in sentence, and the syntagmatic relationship of the sentence

Elliptical expression and the key sentence pattern

The child uses the technique of an elliptical expression, / na:n/ (I), while it preserves the linear order of the Tamil language sentence, (S) OV (Subject + Object + Verb) in U3.

The child takes some time to utter the appropriate case suffix, /kɨl∂/ (under), to complete the sentence pattern: sentence adverbial + subject + adverb (prepositional phrase) + verb. Therefore, it repeats the word / maɛʌɵ/ ɵɨkkɨ/. (U5)

The child is mature, considering the subject as an elliptical expression to maintain speed and continuity in the story in U12.

When it repeats the possessive phrase, / kall∂viɻɪn̪ðɨða:m, siŋgnɵɵɪr∂ ka:ll∂/ in U13, the child is aware of the elliptical expression of the Verb, / viɻɪnðɨða:m/.This fact is observable from his correct repeat use of the suffix attached to the word, /k∂:l/ + / l∂/ = /ka:ll∂/.

Reversion of subject-verb order and its disagreement

The subject-verb order is reversed in U7: adverb (time) + adverb (place) + verb + subject. However, there is a subject-verb disagreement. The subject is plural, but the Verb is singular. The plural verb should be /vaŋ̪ðanava:m./

*Prepositions in English functionally as Inflectional Suffixes in Tami*l

Like Latin, Tamil is also an inflected language. Its nouns usually have the case ending system, which is not found in English. In U11, the subject is merely a noun, but it

should not be according to the standard spoken Tamil. It should be /"muyalɪkɪ"/, a noun with the nominal case instead of /muyal/. There is no space in Tamil to divide the suffix from the noun in this type of written form. English Prepositions are Tamil inflectional suffixes. The adverb of place, /va:r*ə* vaɻiil*ə*/ should come at the front position.

The positions and functions of suffixes in sentences

In U11, the sentence pattern as it is found in the expression is subject (noun) + Adv + adjective phrase as complement + Verb (the elliptical expression, /ɪrɪn̪ðaðɪ/ (was). The child has also expressed his knowledge in adequately using the suffix /a:m/in the place where necessary. The standard spoken form would be / va:r*ə* vaɻiil*ə* muyaɻɪkɪ sariaɪn*ə* kaɪlaippa:h*ə* ɪrɪn̪ð*ə*a:m/. However, for stylistic purposes, the child has deleted the verb 'be' so that the suffix /a:m/ is attached to the adjectival complement, / kaɻaippa:m/. This process has deleted the phonemes /h*ə*/ and added only /m/ since the word has /a:/ at the end.

The syntagmatic relationship of the sentence

The child shows his attempt at bringing out the direct speech's immediate effect in its indirect speech of his narration in U14. The syntagmatic relationship of the sentence would reveal this fact. In the standard spoken Tamil, the indirect speech will be /ʌpp*ə*, e:n ɪvvʌɻavɪ le: t̪ en̪d̪ɪ/. However, in direct speech, it will occur at the end of the utterance. Therefore, the child has placed the part at the end. Besides, it has placed the word / en̪d̪ɪ / (that) to express an indirect speech. Further, the child performs a code-mixing using the English word *late* /le:t̪/.

The analysis at the semantic level

Verb inflexion featuring the elliptical expression of the subject

In U3, the child's answer, /ti:kut̪it̪ʒtʒ*ə*n/ has the subject, /na:n/ as an elliptical expression in U3. However, semantically this subject is denoted in the Verb, / kut̪it̪ʒtʒ*ə*n/. The inflectional suffix, /-*ə*n/, referring to the first person singular, gives the idea that the child uses the elliptical expression, (I) /na:n/ as the subject.

Subject denoting the elliptical expression of the verb

In U4, it happens the other way round. The child has the verb /ɪrɪkkɪr*ə*ðɪ/ (is) as the elliptical expression. Here too, semantically, this verb is denoted by using the subject /ʌðɪ/ (that), a demonstrative for non-human singular entities.

Semantic generalisation

The child makes a mistake semantically in using the adverb /na:ɻaɪkkɪ/ for /ʌɖɪʊʊana:l̪/ (the following day) in U10. Though the child is semantically able to differentiate between the single word noun, /na:l/ (day) and the two morphemic noun (noun + suffix), /na:ɻaɪkkɪ/ (tomorrow), that is, /na:l̪/ + /aɪkkɪ/. It uses /na:ɻaɪkkɪ/ in the past tense. Semantically speaking, the child tries to generalise the concept of `tomorrow' for both present and past tenses. It proves the child's capability for semantic generalisation.

Semantic redundancy

The child shows semantic redundancy in its use of / eɻɪmpinɔ:n̪*ə*/ (having got up) and /muɻit̪ʒtʒɪppa:ʊʊɪ/ (opened its eyes and look at) in U12. Here, though the words are semantically different at the deep level, it is more approximately less similar at the surface level. However, surprisingly, the child is aware of its deep-level semantic implications. The utterance, /eɻɪmpinɔ:n̪*ə*/ means to *'awake from sleep and leave the place where one slept.'* The utterance, /muɻit̪ʒtʒɪppa:ʊʊɪ/ means *`to open one's eyes and look at something."* The child has made an error in the sequence of the verb forms.

First, the child uses "got up" and second, uses 'opened eyes and looked at However, the natural order is the reverse. The child has made this sequential error because of the influence of the semantic nature of the consequential words, /taɪm*ə* pa:kke:kkuɭ̪l̪*ə*/ (looking at the time). The verb participle, /pa:ʊʊɪ/ (looking at) is uttered in anticipation of the Verb, /pa:kke:kuɭ̪l̪*ə*/ (while looking at) and the object, /taɪm*ə*/. Here also, there is an example of 'redundancy within redundancy.' In Tamil, / mvɻit̪ʒtʒɪ + p+ pa:ʊʊɪ/ is regular phrasal usage. So instead of uttering first /muɻit̪ʒtʒəðɪ/ then /eɻɪmpit̪ʒtʒa:m/, the child utters the verbs in the semantically wrong order because of the influence of these words and the phrasal usage.

Synonyms

The child uses the term/n̪ɪɻʌl/ (shadow) for /vimpam/ (reflection) in U17. Semantically the child has generalised that the constituents of reflection and that of shadow are the same; or, though it identifies the difference, it may not know the Tamil word, /vimpam/ for reflection. Therefore, it has extended the nature of `shadow' to that of reflection. Further, the idea behind a reflection is more complex than a shadow for a child to grasp easily. Sometimes, the child may consider, provided that the child knows the term /vimpam/, that both /n̪ɪɻʌl/and / vimpam/ are synonyms.

The analysis at the pragmatic level

Contextual appropriateness and communicative intention

The child uses the one-word utterance /bisnəs/ to answer the question in U1. From a pragmatic point of view, language is a shared system of beliefs and inferences. Here, the child is aware that its one-word utterance is contextually appropriate. The child's communicative intention is vast when the question, "what is (your) father doing? is asked. The child communicates that (1). It is *'**my father is doing** business.' It is '**business** that my father is doing.'* The child's answer is the same in U2. It is contextually appropriate. The communicative intention is that (1*) it is **I** who **is studying** at the convent* (2*). It is **'at the convent'** I am studying*.

The child's answer reflects a **pragmatic** interpretation in U3. To the question (Tamil version), ***'what (did you) eat in (the) morning?*** The child says,*"(I) **drank tea."*** The question is about "eating" not about "drinking" but the child answers that he drank tea. The communicative intention or the speaker's meaning can be that *it **did not eat anything** in the morning. He **only drank tea** in the morning*.The child abandons expressing verbally ***"to the lion the king"*** **f**or pragmatic interpretation in U10. The child thinks omitting this expression is also contextually appropriate in its narration.

In U15, the child says '/ðŋgð… ennama:ðɪrɪɔrura:jaɪillaiɳðəka:ʈʈilð/. The lion said to that hare, ***"where… like me, no (any) king in this jungle."*** In U16, /muyalsɔllitʒtʒɪ irɪkka:meɳɖɪ / ***(The hare told that (there) was another king)***. Here too, the child intentionally deleted the noun phrase, /innɔrɪʌrʌsan/ (another king) in the utterance, /muyal sɔllitʒtʒɪ ɪnnɔrɪ ʌrʌsan ɪrɪkka:meɳɖɪ/. That means, pragmatically, it relates to the lions. Deletion also is contextually appropriate.

Semantic misinterpretation and pragmatic interpretation

In U17, the child gives much pragmatic information at the expense of making semantic errors. For example, in the first sentence, the child did not use the Tamil words for 'who' /muyal/ (the hare) 'whom' /siŋgʌɵɵð/ (the lion). The full sentence would be like this /ʌppa muyal siŋgnɵɵð ɔrukɪŋəɵɵɪkkuɭɭð … kɔɳɖɪ pɔ:ykaːʈʈe:kkuɭɭð …. ʌðirð ŋɪɻʌɻ ɵeriŋjɪðaːm/. In the second sentence, the omission of the words/siŋgʌɵɵɪkkɪ/ (the lion) and / innɔrɪ/ (another) has caused semantic misinterpretations. However, the child expects a pragmatic interpretation of the sentence.

The semantical misinterpretation is that the two lions (one is the original, and the other is its reflection in the water) are difficult to distinguish by the listener. Without these words, pragmatically, the context makes us understand and distinguish the lions with the child's sequential narration of the story's events. The complete sentence would be like this: /ʌppa ..siŋgʌɵɵɪkkɪ iðɪkkuɭɭð innorɪ siŋgʌmɪrɪkkeɳɖɪ ɵeriŋjɪʈʈaːm./

The above examples show that the child has some pragmatic presuppositions in language communication.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Lust & Eisele (1991) explored, "Garman's (1974) research on Tamil CLA and the resultant linguistic strategy and two prelinguistic strategies to explain the results of a question-picture choice task involving sentences with embedded and subordinate clauses." They proposed "four processing strategies and show that some of Garman's findings are better explained not as the outcome of prelinguistic strategies but as an artefact of the experimental design. The data provide evidence of a grammatical sensitivity - demonstrated in recent language-acquisition studies." When looking at the child's language acquisition overall, it seems that the child has already acquired the necessary knowledge in Tamil to communicate its thoughts and messages via experimentation, revealing unintended grammatical sensitivity. More or less, its speech skill is equal to an adult's speech except in some features analysed here, i.e., the errors and mistakes at some levels of analysis.

The child is six and a half years old. The child is a male studying in year one. It is a monolingual child though it uses three English words in its speech: "business", convent, and time. These terms have become very familiar in our society. We almost hardly use their Tamil equivalents. So, it is not surprising that the child also uses these terms in his speech.

This research has revealed substantial analysis and findings at each level of linguistic systems. At the phonological level, the child cannot distinguish voicing as a distinctive feature in English and not a distinguishing feature in Tamil. The phoneme/u/ is transformed to /ɨ/ in all three positions of a word: front, middle, and back. Internal and external sandhis are used. The consonant clusters are identified. The child is aware of assimilation. Here, in this utterance, /k/ is assimilated to /g/ to cluster with /ŋ/ in the utterance, /niːŋgʌl̪/. The phoneme, /k/ is assimilated to /h/ to cluster with /r/.

In the analysis at the morphological level, affixation is visible, especially in using suffixes. The morphemes indicating tenses are used significantly though there is confusion over the past and future forms. The morpheme indicating conjunction /im/ is appropriately used. The child correctly applies the morphemes indicating word classes with nouns and adverbs. The child is not very successful in using the morphemes indicating plurality.

In the analysis at the syntactic level, the elliptical expression and the critical sentence pattern are distinguished and adequately used in the correct context with co-text. It is interesting to note that subject, object and Verb are implied in the elliptical expression and sometimes in violation of the established order in the Tamil language, but it is a stylistic use. The significant feature is the reversion of subject-verb order. However, there are disagreements in numbers. The child learns English in school, so some English words are also used. Apart from that, the prepositions in English are functionally represented as inflectional suffixes in Tamil. The case suffixes or morphemic suffixes are handled satisfactorily, especially in their positions and functions in a sentence. The syntagmatic relationship of the sentence is maintained in its narration.

In the semantic level analysis, the verb inflexion featuring the subject's elliptical expression and the reverse are competently used. Though the child makes semantic generalisations, sometimes, they are not used pragmatically in the proper context. Another natural trend among children is the repetition of words, even morphs and morphemes. Here also, some expressions of semantic redundancy appear. Though generally, children can identify and use synonyms for most familiar and popular words, when the semantic complexity increases, the children struggle. Here too, the child is confused over the Tamil equivalents of 'shadow' and 'reflection.'

In the analysis at the pragmatic level, the child performs amazingly. The contextual appropriateness and communicative intention are apparent. They are correlated to elliptical expressions. However, the child sometimes commits semantic misinterpretation while providing time and space for the proper pragmatic interpretation of many expressions.

Since the child has passed its sixth year, more or less he has managed to internalise the linguistic systems of his mother tongue, the Tamil. However, although many observations have been made about CLA, little systematic work has been done on the Tamil language in Sri Lanka.

After analysing the child's language acquisition at the five levels, it is possible to say that the child owns considerable 'Language Universals' that form the basis of this story's narration. Though the story is not its creation or innovation but conditioned, reinforced by his teachers or parents and narrated by him, the utterances are not a simple variation of the elders' sentences. Most of the sentences he utters are of a good standard of his own making and the result of his precise acquisition. (e.g.) Analyses on Elliptical Expression and the Key Sentence Pattern, Reversion of subject-verb order and its disagreement and The Syntagmatic Relationship of the Sentence.

The elder could not have narrated some of the sentences uttered by the child to him!. He changed them. So it enforces the idea that he has captured the 'rules' and 'systems' of the Tamil language and not just the sentences, phrases, and words of this story narrated by the elders to him. Analysis on Morpheme Indicating Conjunction and Morpheme Indicating Word Classes clearly show this capacity for generalisation and forming rules.

So here it verifies Chomsky's (1959) mentalist approach to language as well. In addition to the linguistic output from the elders or environment outside, his innate language faculties also contribute to uttering these sentences. The "constructionist" perspective (Elman *et al*., 1996) accounts for general and nonlinguistic learning capacities for linguistic competence. However, this perspective domain declined due to Chomsky's (1959) anti-behaviourist position. Nevertheless, the research on nonlinguistic learning capacities, such as tracking the statistics of words or sounds in language input, continues (Saffran *et al*., 1996). The past research examined children's ability to use distributional aspects of language input (Saffran *et al*., 2007). They revealed the child's potential for informative content of the language data statistically and their accessing ability.

Since this child belongs to Piaget's 3rd stage of a child's development (Intuitive thought: four and a half years to seven years) though he can perceive the things in the environment, he is unable to conceive time, space, relations of temporal order, duration and their classifications in a systematic 'logical manner'. For example, he is not able to identify the two lions, the lion and here (analysis 5.2), and the two terms "shadow" and "reflection" (analysis 4.5). These examples show his inability to conceive classifications properly. Utterance No (15) is an example of his inability to conceive time, space and temporal order and duration relations. In this utterance, he skips from an incomplete sentence

to another incomplete sentence without any order or system in the timing and the space of the story's events. The sentences are incomplete because sometimes the verbs are incomplete, and sometimes the subjects are incomplete or confused. Perhaps his power of perception is quicker than that of conception, appropriate for this stage of cognitive development.

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